

# ***Iowa Outdoors***

**Iowa Department of Natural Resources**  
**[www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)**

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## **CAMPING KICK-OFF WEEKEND TAKE 2; MOVES TO MAY 16 - 18**

DES MOINES - The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is giving Camping Kick-off Weekend another go ‘round because poor weather affected turnout over much of the state. Camping Kick-off Weekend will be May 16, 17 and 18, in Iowa’s state parks.

Parks staff will hand out gift packages, while the supplies last, to campers using state parks during May 16, 17 and 18, that includes a camping coupon good for one night of camping, a free issue of *Iowa Outdoors* magazine, recipes, camping tips and other materials.

“Let’s face it, the weather was lousy. Generally, people do not want to go camping when it’s 50 degrees, the wind is howling and the weekend starts off with a good dose of rain,” said Kevin Szcodronski, chief of the DNR’s State Parks Bureau. “We had a steady diet of reservation cancellations and no-shows at the campsite. Even our more heavily used parks were well below their normal use.”

He said Rock Creek was at 33 percent capacity, Lake Ahquabi at 50 percent, Pine Lake at 12 percent and Marble Beach at 45 percent.

“We handed out some of the gift bags last weekend and will hand out the remaining gift packages until the supply is gone. We will also try to offer a variety of interpretive programs in the campgrounds, similar to what was originally planned,”

Szcodronski said. “I must say, I was impressed with the number of campers we did have in the parks, given the weather over much of the state.”

Iowa has 53 state parks that allow camping. The coupon may be used at anytime after Camping Kickoff Weekend. Campers needing some of the add-on campsite amenities, such as full hookups or cable TV, may use the coupon but will need to pay the difference.

Campers will have to pay the appropriate site fees to camp during Camping Kick-off Weekend. Campsite reservation may be made online at [www.reserveiaparks.com](http://www.reserveiaparks.com), or secured on a first come, first serve basis for a non-reservable site. For more information on state parks, visit the Iowa DNR website at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov)

**For more information, contact Szcodronski at 515-281-8674, or Mick Klemesrud, with the DNR, at 515-281-8653.**

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## **“TAKE ME FISHING” CAMPAIGN LAUNCHES AS SEASON OPENS**

DES MOINES - Iowa is teaming up with the Recreational Boating & Fishing Foundation (RBFF) and 29 other states in a national campaign this spring to encourage more people to get out on the water and go fishing.

“Fishing is a great way for Iowans to spend time with their families and friends and enjoy the outdoors,” said DNR Director Richard Leopold. “Fishing is fun, it’s affordable, and with hundreds of lakes and waterways across the state, it’s accessible to anyone.”

Iowa and other partners in the Take Me Fishing™ campaign are using a coordinated approach to encourage anglers to participate in fishing. In May and June, TV and radio ads sponsored by the national RBFF organization will air in Iowa and across the nation. Additionally, this past week the Iowa DNR sent 40,000 post cards to “lapsed” anglers – folks who didn’t buy a license a year ago -- urging them to purchase a license and create a memory for someone by taking them fishing.

“We hope people think of their own special memories fishing as a kid, and pass that tradition on to others,” said Marion Conover, DNR Fisheries Bureau Chief. “Iowa is a great place to fish, and spring is when the fishing really heats up for those easy-to-catch shore fish like blue gill and crappie.”

“It’s a perfect time to take kids out and introduce them to this outdoor experience,” added Conover.

Research has shown that anglers list spending time with family and friends as among the top reasons they fish, and that fishing builds a stronger connection and stewardship for lakes and rivers and the fish and other aquatic life in them.

Sales of Iowa's annual resident fishing license purchases have held steady at around 300,000 per year. Nationally, however, participation in fishing declined 12 percent between 2001 to 2006, according to the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service's 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation.

Getting anglers back on the water and buying fishing licenses is important because every license dollar goes directly to natural resources, helping maintain Iowa's fish populations, healthy waters and aquatic conservation efforts. Additionally, for every license Iowa sells, it receives \$10 in federal funding from excise tax on the sale of fishing gear.

According to Frank Peterson, president and CEO of RBFF, individual anglers can help make the Take Me Fishing campaign successful. "Take someone fishing who has never been, or who hasn't been in a long time," he says. "You'll build the memories of a lifetime, generate more money to invest in Iowa's fisheries through the sale of fishing licenses, tackle and motorboat fuel, and help nurture the next generation of caretakers for Iowa's great fishing and boating activities."

RBFF has invested in 30-second radio commercials in Iowa and other participating states. It also has designed posters, print advertising and other materials for the partners to use, and provided grant money to states like Iowa for its direct mail efforts. Its centerpiece is a new [TakeMeFishing.org](http://TakeMeFishing.org) Web site, where anglers can find tips on fishing tackle to use, fishing techniques, fish identification, maps showing lakes and rivers to fish and boat, and links back to all states' fisheries programs.

According to Conover, sport fishing in Iowa generates \$580 million in economic impact, supports more than 6,369 jobs, and generates \$35 million in state and local taxes.

In Iowa, fishing licenses can be purchased on the Internet at [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov), or at hundreds of local retailers and bait shops across the state.

**For more information, contact Julie Tack, Iowa DNR (515) 281-8665 or Heather Sieber, RBFF (703) 778-5160**

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## **BOWHUNTERS PROVIDE VALUABLE DATA ON WILDLIFE**

BOONE – The Iowa bowhunter observation survey is setting the groundwork to track population trends by establishing baseline data for deer, turkeys, and selected

furbearers across the state. The survey, in its fourth year, was designed by the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and Iowa State University.

The purpose of the survey is to determine the value of bowhunter observation data as a supplement to other deer data collected by the DNR and to develop a long-term database of selected furbearer data to monitor and evaluate population trends. Bowhunters were asked to record the number of antlered deer, antlerless deer, unknown deer, badgers, bobcats, coyotes, gray fox, house cats, opossum, raccoons, red fox, river otters, striped skunks and wild turkeys while hunting.

Methods used by bowhunters are ideal for viewing most wildlife species in their natural surroundings and bowhunters typically spend a large amount of time in bow stands. Participation in this survey is restricted to avid bowhunters, which was defined as those who have obtained a bow license for three consecutive years.

“Not only do avid bowhunters hunt often, but they also have the most experience in selecting good stand locations, controlling or masking human scent, using camouflage, identifying animals correctly and returning surveys,” said Steve Roberts, biometrician with the Iowa DNR.

Bowhunters averaged 14 hunting trips during the 61 day hunting season and provided nearly 123,700 hours of total observation time. The number of hunters who participated in the survey increased 85 percent in 2007, totaling nearly 2,500. A statewide total of 8,991 bowhunters were selected for participation.

“The volume of information provided by the bowhunters could never be duplicated by the staff of biologists, technicians, and conservation officers of the Iowa DNR,” Roberts said. “Their contribution clearly demonstrates their interest in the conservation and management of Iowa’s wildlife.”

To view the survey results, go to [www.iowadnr.gov](http://www.iowadnr.gov), then click on Hunting and Wildlife in the column on the left, then on 07 Bowhunter Survey \* pdf.

**For more information, contact Steve Roberts at 515-432-2823.**

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[electronic photo available]

## **WANT GIANT CATFISH? NO NEED TO WAIT FOR SUMMER - THE ACTION STARTS NOW**

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

Mention the words *giant catfish* and most anglers will turn their thoughts toward hot and humid summer weather, late night fishing excursions, and the potent aroma of fermenting stink bait. And while it’s true that Iowa’s own Mister Whiskers does indeed

love the spa atmosphere, the sport of catfishing does have another, less known aspect that most anglers neglect.

When winter ends and the ice comes off Iowa lakes and streams, channel 'cats are as eager to feed as any other gamefish. Forget those rancid homemade concoctions and commercial stink baits, they're just not necessary right now. Although catfish will scavenge during early spring, they are also highly aggressive predators and are more than willing to hunt down live meals.

Regardless of whether spring anglers choose to fish lakes or rivers, those in the know head to wherever tile lines or natural tributary streams empty into larger waters. Minnows [bigger the better] are the universal bait of choice. Having said that, it should also be noted that the 14 ½ pounder pictured on this page was hooked on a tiny crappie minnow. Just goes to show that there are few hard and fast rules in the world of angling. When it comes to spring fishing, just getting out there can be the most important ingredient to success.

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## **DNR AMERICORPS CELEBRATES AMERICORPS WEEK**

DES MOINES – The Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps Program within the Iowa DNR will join the second nationwide celebration of AmeriCorps Week, May 11-18, spotlighting the vital work done by AmeriCorps members in communities across Iowa. AmeriCorps Week is a recruitment and recognition event designed to bring more Americans into service, salute AmeriCorps members and alumni for their powerful impact, and thank the community partners who make AmeriCorps possible.

“We are proud to be part of AmeriCorps and grateful for the AmeriCorps members who are getting things done for environmental needs in Iowa,” said Tricia Rummer, director of Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps. “AmeriCorps members have made a tremendous impact allowing us to extend our outreach and services by recruiting 1,000 community volunteers to work alongside them last year.”

Since 1994, more than 540,000 men and women have joined the National Service Corps - AmeriCorps, and they have given more than 705 million hours of service to their country. AmeriCorps works through existing organizations and helps them reach more people and better achieve their mission.

Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps members work alongside staff in the Iowa DNR, the U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Polk County Conservation Board, and other project partners. Members contribute to the statewide community empowerment efforts of these organizations by providing environmental education, marketing, ecosystem management, trail work, wildlife habitat management, and prairie seed harvest. They serve in the following Iowa counties: Allamakee, Black Hawk, Boone,

Bremer, Guthrie, Hardin, Jackson, Johnson, Linn, Louisa, Madison, Marshall, Palo Alto, Polk, Pottawattamie, Ringgold, Union, Van Buren, Warren, Webster and Woodbury.

After completing their term of service, AmeriCorps members typically continue to serve their communities in a variety of ways. AmeriCorps alumni who have served with the Iowa DNR have gone on to become full-time employees in not only the DNR but also County Conservation Boards and other natural resource minded organizations. No matter what career they choose, members continue to utilize the skills and knowledge they gained from their national service experience.

For more information on the Iowa DNR Keepers of the Land AmeriCorps Program, please contact Tricia Rummer, [tricia.rummer@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:tricia.rummer@dnr.iowa.gov) or 515-281-4539, or visit [www.keepersoftheland.org](http://www.keepersoftheland.org) and click on the AmeriCorps link.

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## **DNR TO HOST FORUM ON PLACE-BASED EDUCATION**

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources is hosting a forum to bring together teachers, school administrators, natural resource professionals, Area Education Agency consultants, and university faculty to discuss the best ways to help schools across the state engage youth in place-based education that incorporates natural, built, and human components of communities.

The initial focus is to identify needs, constraints and opportunities for place-based approaches for middle-school audiences to learn about local waters and their watersheds, which are landscapes connected to them.

The place-based education forum will be held from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., June 9, at the Iowa 4H Center, near Madrid. Activities will include an overview of models of place-based activities and support systems; facilitated discussions of formal education requirements, constraints, and opportunities related to place-based education; and development of next steps for on-going collaboration to implement and sustain place-based approaches.

Cost of the forum will be covered by the Iowa DNR's Aquatic Education Program. Limited funding is available to reimburse participants for mileage. If you are interested in attending, contact the Aquatic Education Program at [AquaticEd\\_Info@dnr.iowa.gov](mailto:AquaticEd_Info@dnr.iowa.gov) or by phone at 641-747-2200 for an electronic registration form. Space is limited.

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